

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 03028 271011Z
ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4391
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

S E C R E T BEIRUT 3028

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR LE IS SY US
SUBJ: SOUTH LEBANON: TRIP OF FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS

1. FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS ASKED ME TO SEE HIM MORNING JUNE 25. SAUDI, KUWAITI AND EGYPTIAN AMBASSADORS PRECEDED ME. PURPOSE WAS TO INFORM US OF HIS PLANS TO VISIT CAIRO, JIDDA AND KUWAIT WITHIN NEXT WEEK TO DISCUSS NUMBER OF MATTERS, INCLUDING FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE, BUT WITH PARTICULAR FOCUS ON SOUTH LEBANON.

2. BOUTROS STARTED BY ASKING ME WHAT WE THOUGHT OF CURRENT DISCUSSIONS REGARDING A CEASE-FIRE, UNDER WHICH SAIQA AND FATAH WOULD ARRANGE FOR WITHDRAWAL OF PALESTINIANS FROM CERTAIN SENSITIVE SPOTS IN BORDER REGION AND LEBANESE WOULD SEND FORCES OF ORDER IN TO REPLACE THEM, IN RETURN FOR UNDERTAKING FROM CHRISTIAN FORCES NOT TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF SITUATION AND TO RESPECT STATUS QUO. SPECIFICALLY, HE ASKED WHETHER I THOUGHT ISRAEL WOULD RESPECT SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT.

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3. I SAID I NOT FAMILIAR WITH DETAILS OF WHAT BEING PROPOSED, BUT WAS CONFIDENT ISRAELIS HAD NO DESIRE TO PROVOKE TROUBLE AND THAT THEY WOULD BE WILLING TO RESPECT CEASE-FIRE OF SORT DESCRIBED. HE ASKED WHETHER USG WOULD BE WILLING TO USE PRESSURE AGAINST ISRAELIS TO MAKE THEM RESTRAIN CHRISTIANS. I SAID I COULD NOT COMMIT MY GOVERNMENT, NOR ISRAELIS, BUT THOUGHT BOTH OF US WOULD SUPPORT IDEA OF CEASE-FIRE.

4. BOUTROS ASKED WHAT ISRAELIS WANTED. I SAID ISRAELIS HAD SAID THEY WANTED PEACE AND STABILITY IN LEBANON, THAT THEY WANTED TO MAINTAIN SO-CALLED GOOD FENCE, AND THAT THEY FELT AN OBLIGATION TO PROTECT THE CHRISTIAN VILLAGERS. BOUTROS ASKED IF THEY WANTED TO PROTECT CHRISTIANS OR THEIR OWN BORDER AGAINST PALESTINIANS. I SAID THE LATTER WAS PROBABLY A FACTOR, BUT THEY ALSO APPEARED TO FEEL SOME RESPONSIBILITY FOR CHRISTIANS.

5. BOUTROS ASKED WHAT WE THOUGHT OF RUMORS THAT THE ISRAELIS PLANNED TO TAKE TYRE. I SAID THERE HAD BEEN MUCH DISCUSSION ABOUT THIS AND AT ONE POINT THE CHAMOUNISTS AND PHALANGE HAD APPARENTLY BEEN CONSIDERING COOPERATION WITH THE ISRAELIS IN A SWEEP OF SOUTH LEBANON. I DID NOT BELIEVE ANYONE WAS STILL THINKING SERIOUSLY IN THESE TERMS ANYMORE, HOWEVER. HE SAID HE DID NOT EITHER, BUT OBVIOUSLY WAS RELIEVED TO HAVE ME SAY IT. HE SAID IN THAT CASE THEY WOULD PROBABLY TRY FOR A CEASE-FIRE.

6. COMMENT: WHILE CEASE-FIRE IDEA SOUNDS PRETTY RUDIMENTARY, AND WE WONDER WHY LEBANESE HAVE TAKEN SO LONG TO GET AROUND TO IT, THEY OBVIOUSLY TREADING VERY WARILY AND PROBABLY WILL NEED ALL THE ENCOURAGEMENT THEY CAN GET. IN PARTICULAR, THEY NEED REASSURANCE THAT ISRAELIS WOULD RESTRAIN MAJOR HADDAD AND HIS TROOPS IN EVENT CEASE-FIRE COMES INTO EFFECT. BELIEVE NOW IS TIME FOR US TO WEIGH IN WITH ISRAELIS ON SUBJECT. ASSUME THEY WOULD WELCOME IDEA, PROVIDED THEY HAD SOME ASSURANCE PALESTINIANS WERE INDEED
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VACATING BORDER AREAS. IF THAT IS CASE, IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO AT LEAST HAVE THEIR AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE TO CONVEY TO GOL.

7. GIVEN LACK OF ORGANIZED UNITS, WE ASSUME LEBANESE FORCES TO BE MOVED INTO AREA WOULD BE TOKEN IN SIZE, E.G. 50 MEN FOR NABATIYAH, WITHOUT CAPABILITY OF MORE THAN SYMBOLIC RESISTANCE TO EITHER PALESTINIANS OR CHRISTIANS. ACCEPTANCE OF PROPOSAL WOULD REQUIRE ABSTINENCE ON PART OF ALL PARTIES, AND A WILLINGNESS RESPECT SYMBOLIC PRESENCE. WE DO NOT KNOW WHETHER THIS IS IN FACT WORKABLE, BUT THINK IT WORTH A TRY.
PARKER

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